

Signs of the TIMES.

I N

TWO DISCOURSES

Delivered at

Peckham in Surrey:

O N T H E

GENERAL FAST,

February 11, 1757.

Wherein some *Grand Events* of Scripture
Prophecy are considered and improved.

— With two Hymns.

By JOHN MILNER, D. D.

*Terrae saepe fremitus, saepe mugitus, saepe mo-
tus, nostrae reipublicae, multa caeteris civitatibus,
avia et vera praedixerint.*

Cic. de Divin. I. 18.

*De SIGNIS quae praedicta sunt a prophetis, licet
scere. Praedixerunt enim, SIGNA, quibus con-
firmatio temporum et expectanda sit a nobis in sin-
gulos dies, et timenda. Lactan. de vit. beat. 25.*

L O N D O N

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MDCCLVII.

TWO DISCOURSES

Preached in January

GENERAL FAST

Wherein some Great Errors of Scripture
Prophecy are considered and improved.

By JOHN MILNER, D.D.

Dr. Milner has in this Discourse, for a particular
purpose, presented some new and curious
observations upon the Prophecies of Isaiah in an
address to his hearers. I shall deliver them.

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MDCCLXXII.



S E R M O N I.

Signs of the T I M E S.

M A T T. xvi. 3.

— *Can ye not discern the signs of the
T I M E S?*

THE Jews, who constantly made their boast of the law, as delivered with great solemnity, and witnessed from heaven by miracles, thought meanly of every other religious institution, which they supposed could not, like theirs, pretend to a divine original. When therefore our Saviour appeared a teacher of religion, they imagined it would equally confound and mortify him, to demand some proof, that he was sent of God; some miraculous proof that he acted by a divine power and commission. *The Pharisees also with*
A 2 *the*

the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him, that he would shew them a sign from heaven ^a.

Our Saviour's answer was very proper to rebuke and confute those insidious adversaries. He very justly supposes, that, his answering the ancient characters of prophecy, and the many miracles, which he wrought, were certain and evident signs of his being the MESSIAH. They could discern the tokens of lesser things, which happened amongst them. They could, for instance, predict the weather, from the appearance and colour of the sky. And why were they not equally skilful in judging of times, which were of vastly more importance? Those times had their preparations, and pre-significant tokens of their approach, equally clear and convincing: so that, if they were not affected by them, it must be owing to their prejudices, and want of care.—This is the connexion of the words with our Saviour's discourse.

What he supposes here is, that times, of any consequence to mankind, have their signs. This notion may very truly be applied to the grand periods and revolutions of the world. Before those have existed, some previous notice of their approach has been communicated to mankind. Either some special messenger has been sent to give the warning: or some unusual events have happened in the natural world, to raise mens expectations of some change in the moral.—The grand periods of Providence have their signs, which it becomes us to observe, as to what is past; and to expect, with proper exercises of faith, patience and hope, as to what is yet future.—I beg leave to shew

I . . . That

^a Verse 1.

I . . . *That it has been the usual way of Providence to give Signs of such Times.*

II . . . *To consider what grand periods and events we have yet to expect from Prophecy.*

III . . . *To enquire whether we have had lately any Signs and tokens of some grand period approaching.*

Was this subject better known or considered, it would have, I am persuaded, a good effect, towards raising and enlarging our views; filling our minds with noble sentiments of divine providence; and convincing us of the ingratitude and folly of sin, which renders us opposite to the divine scheme, and entails upon us disappointment, suffering, and ruin. — I shall consider, each of those heads, and apply them to the present occasion of our assembly.

I . . . *I would shew that it has been the usual way of Providence to give Signs of such times, either by some special messenger; or the production of some uncommon Events in the natural world.*

The first remarkable event happened, after the world had stood about 1600 years. Men were then become so corrupt, that God resolv'd to destroy, that whole wicked race; except eight persons, who were reserved from this destruction, to people the future world. —

Warning was given of the approaching calamity by Noah, a preacher of righteousness.

They

They ridicul'd his predictions, and lived wholly secure in the pursuit of business and pleasure^b. They followed their corrupt inclinations, till nearer indications of ruin alarmed them to look out for means of safety.——The rains descended, more like cataracts of water, than rain. An earthquake broke up the great abyss, and all nature was in agitation. But what affrightment and despair must seize the inhabitants, when they saw the fury of the desolation increase. They slighted the prophetic warning; were surprized and destroyed in the height of their security.

The cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, equally remarkable for their sin and overthrow, must not be forgotten^c. They had introduced amongst them a new species of vice, to the reproach of human nature, and which has continued in the world ever since.——Those once populous cities were forewarned of their provocations and danger by *Lot*; whose righteous soul, no doubt, remonstrated against this new wickedness with equal warmth and severity^d. but his admonitions were in vain, untill thunders and earthquakes, heaven and earth conspired to extirpate their very name from the earth, and sunk them into a lake, a perpetual memorial of their detestable sin.

The two *Captivities* of the *Jews* were important events to that people. Their conquerors seized their treasures and persons, and carried them into a miserable servitude. It was a settled instruction in their constitution, that, so long as they were obedient, they should be prosperous; but that wickedness would certainly deprive

^b Matt xxiv. 38. ^c Gen. xix. ^d ii. Pet. ii. 7. 8.

deprive them of their privileges and the divine protection. Before these Events, they were greatly degenerated. The burden of their Prophets tended to lead them to repentance and reformation; but their Prophets preach in vain. The wrath of God was solemnly denounced; but neither shame nor fear are excited; till they felt the weight of their captivity. — After their return from the last captivity, they grew more degenerate and incorrigible, and ripened apace for their final ruin. — There were Signs of its approach; sufficient proofs of an angry offended God, particularly, in that they now wanted the visible presence of their king *Jehovah* on the mercy seat, the *Schechinah*: and the *sacred fire* from heaven to consume their sacrifices. The removal of those advantages might well raise a suspicion, that they did not stand so fair, as heretofore, in the divine favour. Their iniquity increased, and they were filling up their measure apace. — In this period their MESSIAH appeared. They treated him with the utmost contempt, and at length procured his crucifixion, as a Malefactor. I say procured, because the power of life and death was taken out of their hands, and reserved to their conquerors, the Romans. — Here was a remarkable ancient prophecy fulfilled, in the departure of the *scepter* from Judah, and the ceasing of a *law-giver*, or ruler in that tribe*. This abolition of government has now continued 1700 years; and therefore *Shiloh*, interpreted by the ancient Jews to be the MESSIAH, is come, and has been come many ages ago.

In JESUS CHRIST, the author of our religion, all the ancient prophecies eminently center'd; his

* Gen. xlix. 10.

his many miracles, his doctrine of truth and grace; the condition of his life; his sufferings and death, were so many Signs of those times; but they regarded them not. They put to death their *Messiah*, their deliverer and friend, and by that impious act hasten'd their own desolation.

We are now come to the grand CRISIS of their affairs, and may expect to find it usher'd in with important Signs. And it is worthy our observation, that our Saviour predicted their approaching fate with such precision, as to point out the Romans, the instruments of it; by their Standards. On those they bore the Eagle, and the images of their Emperors. *Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the Eagles be gathered together*^f. Those images they worshipped, as their Gods of war^g; and swore by them^h. Those are called in Scripture *the abomination of desolation*ⁱ; because they would be odious to the Jews, when they should see these idols set up in the holy city, after it was taken.

The more immediate forerunners of this great event were the *bearing of wars and rumours of wars, of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*, i. e. hostile commotions in several adjacent places.—*Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places*^k. St. Luke adds to all those calamities, that there should be *fearful sights, and great Signs from heaven*^l. Josephus, an historian, who lived in those times, is particular in enumerating those Signs, as that there was

^f Matt. xxiv. 28. Luke xvii. 37.

^g Artabanus Parthorum rex ——— aquilas, et Signa Romana, Cæsarumque imagines adoravit.

Sueton. Vit. Calig. xiv. 5.

^h Liv. xxvi. 48.

ⁱ Matt. xxiv. 15. compared with

Luke xxi. 20.

^k Matt. xxiv. 6. 7.

^l Luke xxi. 11.

was "a fiery sword, which hung waving over the city, for a whole year together—that a comet of dreadful aspect appeared, which engaged mens eyes and attention--That the priests, going into the temple by night, at the feast of Pentecost, heard an unusual noise, and this dismal farewell pronounced with an audible voice, LET US GO HENCE.—That the Eastern gate of the temple, all of brass, and which required twenty men to shut, and though bolted and lock'd, flew open of it self at midnight.—That a plain countryman came into the city, four years before their troubles began, and continued day and night denouncing a Woe to bridegrooms and brides, to the temple, to Jerusalem, and the whole people, for the space of seven years and five months. During this time he was not terrified or reduced to silence, either by threats or tortures. In this manner he went on till the city was actually besieged, when he left off. Except once after this, he went upon the walls, repeated the same woes, and concluded with one against himself, at which instant he was killed by a stone from the enemy".

All those alarming Signs and prodigies had no effect upon a blinded, hardened people, till their destruction was complete. Then was fulfilled another part of our Saviour's prediction, viz. *and shall be led away captive into all nations*, not as formerly into one country, where they continued in a body; but into all nations under heaven, disunited, dispersed over the face of the whole earth. It follows, *and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, untill the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled*^m. Thus their universal dispersion

B

and

^m Luke xxi. 24.

and the continuance of it was expressly foretold and we see it verified to our times. Their ruin was to be complete, *their whole house desolate* their slaughter astonishing, for within a year more than twelve hundred thousand Jews fell by the sword. Such a slaughter made by the Roman arms was never heard of before. The conquered Provinces not to extirpate, but bring them in subjection to their power. Surprising that such a carnage should happen under so mild and gracious a prince, as TITUS. But, alas, the obstinacy of this people was incurable. Their factions were so exasperated one against another that they left no room for the clemency of a prince, or the pity of a generous enemy.

Before I conclude this head, I beg leave to make two or three reflections. We have here an undeniable proof of our Saviour's *prophetic spirit*. His enumerating so many calamities, many of them contingent as to us; his speaking of them with such a serious, and affectionate concern, shews his distinct and certain foreknowledge of them. One would have thought this should have made some impression on those who heard them. At least one would hope that they should come with full conviction on their POSTERITY, who have seen the exact and circumstantial accomplishment of all that our Saviour predicted. Who still feel the dreadful effects of their Fathers guilt, being without temple, without altar, without scepter or form of civil government; dispersed into all nations but not incorporated with them. This last is a circumstance, which seems to intimate that Providence, by keeping them distinct from the nations, amongst whom they reside, has some future events to produce with regard to them.

And

And which many predictions favour, as shall be shewn afterwards. I wish the Jews of the present age would consult their own experience, and observe what an exact correspondence there is between *this*, and the predictions of the gospel, supported by the testimony of their own historian. I pray God to pity his once favourite people, and take away the veil from their hearts.

There is something in this account which deserves the attention of the DEISTS. In the gospel they will read an history of events, long before they existed, and which, when they existed, were similar to the history. Can the author of our religion, be an impostor, endued with such a prophetic spirit? Can the wisest of mankind carry their conjectures to such distant periods of time, and suggest what shall happen with such variety of circumstances? If not, the present dispersed condition of the Jews must rise up an incontestable proof of the authority, and divine commission of our blessed Saviour.

We see, *finally*, how obnoxious sin must be to the divine government. Notwithstanding our favourable sentiments, and the many ingenious excuses we are ready to frame for our commission of it, it is detestable to our Creator and Governor. Nothing is more evident, from the history of all mankind, than this, that if we are not to be reformed by the common methods of instruction, God will pour down exemplary punishments, and extirpate an incorrigible race with unrelenting vengeance. After this view of the course of Providence, who can think well of sin, that has destruction and death in its train? *If I be wicked woe unto me*".——I proceed

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II. . . .

^a Job x. 15.

II . . . To consider what grand periods, and events we have reason, from ancient predictions, to expect; and which, as they are successively completed, are so many signs of the approach of that final glorious period of peace, righteousness, and perfection.

The Bible contains an history of events from the beginning to the consummation of all things. A demonstration of that all-perfect wisdom and goodness, which preside over the world. The general meaning of the prophecies, in which those things are expressed, is intelligible enough; though some veil is drawn over the characters of persons and times. A caution, no more than necessary to prevent an ill use of them °.

Those predictions of future events are represented under different figures and images; but then they are related to one another, and so admirably connected in the same design, as if they were but so many parts of one general prophecy.—I shall only take notice of three, which will deserve a very serious attention.

1) *The rise and fall of several mighty empires, which have made, and those which remain, still make a considerable figure in the world.*

The vision of the IMAGE in Nebuchadnezar's dream is very observable. In this is laid the founda-

° Those characters are as clear as they ought to be. Had they been more determinate, those very books would have been objected against Christians, as degrading the majesty of princes; and suggesting motives to sedition and rebellion. Some obscurity therefore might well be expected, and we should be contented with probable and rational conjectures, where certainty is not to be had.

foundation of all Daniel's prophecies^p. The image, according to Daniel's own interpretation, represents a body of FOUR great nations, which should, with extended empire, reign successively over the earth, and conquer each other, as they succeed.

Thus they are appropriated to the visionary scene, by that incomparable genius, for penetration, and insight into the works of God, SIR ISAAC NEWTON. "The head of this image was of gold, and signifies, according to Daniel's own exposition, the *Babylonian empire*. "Thou art this head of gold"^q.—The breast and arms were of silver, and represent the *Persians*, who reigned next.—The belly and thighs were of brass, and represent the *Greeks*; who under Alexander the great conquered the Persians, and reigned next after them[†]. — The legs were of iron, which represent the Romans, who reigned next after the Greeks.—The feet and toes represented, after the incursion of the northern nations, so many smaller kingdoms, into which

" the

^p Dan. ii.

^q Dan. ii. 38.

[†] It is very remarkable that the division of *Alexander's* kingdom and conquests, after his death, amongst his four generals, was foreshewn by *Daniel*, ch. viii. 21, 22. *And the rough he-goat is the king of Grecia, and the great horn, that is between his eyes, is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas FOUR stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation; but not in his power, i. e., not of his family.* "Alexander's kingdom continued in a monarchical form during his reign; and his brother *Aridaeus's*, and his young sons *Alexander* and *Hercules*: and then brake into four kingdoms by the governours of provinces putting crowns on their own heads, and by mutual consent reigning over their provinces, namely, *Cassander*, *Lyfimachus*, *Ptolemy* and *Selucus*." Newton on Daniel, p. 29. 30.

“ the western Roman empire was divided and “ broken.” Others restrain those ten powers to the *German empire*, the remains of the old Roman. They reckon the ten, to be the emperor and the nine electors, and add this consideration to support it, that as the feet and toes are connected, so those ten powers have a principle of union among themselves, which appears no where so visibly as in the *Germanic constitution*. Those *ten powers* now exist, and have existed many ages, whether we extend, or restrain the notion of them.

There is one part of the representation which is yet to come, and it is, *that a stone cut out without hands should smite the image on the feet, that were of iron and clay—and break them in pieces*, and demolish the whole image, i. e. Providence would raise up some new power; small and contemptible in its beginning, but which should be inspired with superior wisdom and courage, and conquer all those nations; and continue great and glorious to the end of all ages.

Those powers, that were represented by the *ten toes*, are changed into another image of *ten horns*^s, the emblems of dignity and power. I shall take no further notice of this image, but only to observe the rise of a power amongst them, the most formidable of all others, whose tyranny and oppression we have felt, and are yet in continual danger from. *And there came up another horn amongst them, in the room of three, that were plucked up—with eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things*^t. “ This “ was a kingdom of a different kind from the “ other

^s Dan. ii. 34.^s Dan. vii.^t Dan. vii. 8.

“other ten, having a life, or Soul peculiar to
“it self, with eyes and a mouth.—By its
“eyes it was a SEER ; and by its mouth speak-
“ing great things, it was a PROPHET”.

This character belongs to the *Church of Rome*, which is a *Seer*, *prophet*, and *king*. In these nations, formerly, we were subject to its Tyranny ; but happily deliver’d by the *Reformation*, and happily secured against it by the *Revolution*. It must be pleasing, I should think, to every good Christian to observe how this formidable power is represented in the Prophecies of *Daniel*, *St. Paul*, and *St. John*, by such circumstances and descriptions, as point directly to the *Church of Rome*, and no other dominion in the world.-----I shall be as brief as the subject will admit, and begin with the account of *Daniel*.

It shall be diverse from all kingdoms”. i. e. its constitution would be different from every other establishment of civil power. This agrees exactly to the Church of Rome, which is founded on mere pretences of Religion, and calls its power a SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY. It presumes to exercise this authority in the name of God, and

“ “ Such a *Seer*, *prophet*, and *king* is the *Church of Rome*.
“ A *Seer* is a Bishop in the literal sense of the word, and
“ this Church claims the universal bishoprick. With his
“ mouth he gives laws to kings and nations, as an oracle,
“ and pretends to infallibility, and that his dictates are
“ binding to the whole world, which is to be a prophet in
“ the highest degree.—In the eighth century, by rooting
“ up and subduing the Exarchate of Ravenna . . . the
“ kingdom of the Lombards. . . . and the Senate and
“ dukedom of Rome, he acquired *Peter’s Patrimony* out of
“ their dominions ; and thereby rose up as a temporal
“ prince, or king, or horn of the fourth Beast.

Newton on Daniel. p. 75.

“ Dan. vii. 23.

and with a plentitude of divine power, which no civil form of government ever yet pretended to.—It goes on, *The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them—shall wear out the saints of the most high, and think to change times, and laws* *. Thus the Church of Rome has set her self to extirpate and destroy all, who will not submit to her authority. Her butcheries and slaughters exceed every thing in the heathen persecutions. Her court of *Inquisition*, that diabolical Engine, has practised every method of cruelty; thus she has worried and wearied the best of men.—*And thinks to change times and laws*, i. e. to alter the nature of things, and remove the foundations of truth, and honesty. This the *Church of Rome* has done by exercising an absolute authority in controversies of Faith, and defining the objects of it, in such sense and with such variety, as she pleases. By this means, this *Church* has not only loaded and deform'd religion with a contemptible pomp and superfluity; but has really sap'd the foundations of all religion: destroying mens natural notions of right and wrong; and advancing ceremony, penances, donations, absolutions, &c. to be of equal value and merit with moral goodness. She has used this power of changing things, so far as to free subjects from the obligation of reasonable oaths, and prepare them for treason and rebellion. What a daring insult is this upon the most High God, to alter the foundations, he has laid for truth, honesty and peace; and to give the worst of men the hope of eternal happiness, by substituting their passports and equivalents in the room of personal holiness?

* Dan. vii. 21. 25.

St. PAUL describes the same adverse power by circumstances still more applicable to the *Church of Rome*. Thus in his second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*; He gives it this title, *the man of sin and the son of perdition*^y; .i.e. a power that actually promotes Sin in the world, and under appearances of religion perfidiously subverts the great design of it. In the same description it is said to be *in the temple of God*^z, to intimate that its pretences are religious. The *Church of Rome* in all her acts and decrees pretends to support her authority by a plenitude of divine power. And thereby, with unparallel'd pride and arrogance, *shewing herself to be God*^a. She usurps dominion over Emperors and Kings, and claims a title, the prerogative of God only, being infallible. Thus she *opposeth and exalteth above all that is called God*^b, or magistrates, and aspires to divinity.—The man of Sin is further discovered by *his coming with all power and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*^c. This character appears all in the *Church of Rome*, by her many legends, boasted miracles, and forceries, by which artificial ways she deceives the ignorant and credulous: inculcates devotion without piety, and religion without virtue.—He is still more express in his Epistle to *Timothy*^d. Now the *spirit*, *speaketh expressly that in the latter times*, .i.e. times of the Messiah, *some should depart from the faith*^e. This was plainly to be a great corruption and apostacy in the Christian Church, not renouncing this profession; but corrupting from its simplicity, and rendering it ineffectual to the holy purposes for which it was intended.

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2. Theff. ii. 3. z ib. v. 4. a ib. v. 4. b ib. v. 4.
 c ib. v. 9. 10. d 1. Tim. iv. e 1 Tim. iv. i.

tended. This the *Church of Rome* has done by the many additions she has made to the foundations of Christianity. She pretends to build on this foundation; but her traditions, her ceremonies, the various Superstitions she has introduced have quite destroyed the beauty and power of Christianity, and engage mens attention to other things. It will avail nothing that she pretends a veneration for the Scripture, when she has found out a way ^f to render it useless; and this appears every where to be the effect, the fixing in all her votaries an absolute contempt of it. At the same time she claims for her traditions an equal respect and reverence. What signifies it to speak of Christ as mediator andaviour of the word, when she has pointed out other mediators and intercessors; and advanced the virgin mother to superior honour, influence and regard. It amounts to nothing*, to speak honourably of piety and virtue, when the appearance

^f The council of *Trent* has established the vulgar Latin to be the true edition of the Bible. But then here the art appears, under pretence of danger of Heresy from bad copies of the decrees, that no one without a licence shall keep or use any other edition, under the severest pains and penalties. By this pretence she keeps the reins in her own hands, and has effectually prevented the knowledge and use of the Scripture. And to bring men into a greater dependance upon themselves, this council has further decreed, that oral tradition is of equal credit and authority with the written word, and ought to be received *pari pietatis affectu, et reverentia* with equal reverence.

Council, Trid. Sess. 24.

* What she advances agreeable to Truth on one hand, demolishes on the other, by her superstitions and idolatry. Like positive and negative quantities in Algebra, they destroy each other. If she destroys the Scripture, the test of truth, she keeps out of sight lest her Errors should be detected, and her usurped authority fall.

appearances of those things are render'd so striking upon the senses, that men easily rest in the outward form. Thus penance shall pass for repentance; decorations, altars, vestments in their worship, for piety; a number of *Ave Marias*, and *Pater Nosters*, warranted by beads, assumes the name of devotion; and a pecuniary mulct admitted, as all the punishment they have reason to dread, for the commission of moral evil.—The character of this apostacy proceeds; giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of Devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy—*forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats*². Here it is evident, that in this apostacy would appear a species of idolatry, viz. the worship of departed spirits, express'd in our translation by mens being *seduced by the doctrine of Devils*^h, i. e. the worship of departed Saints, as the Church of Rome has practis'd, and appointed offices of invocation and devotion for such—*Forbidding to marry*. This she has prohibited to all her Clergy, contrary to the dictates of nature. By this means, her Priests are a body of men detach'd from the society, in which they live, in interest and power; cannot give that natural and sure pledge of love to their country, as others do,

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by

² i. Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

^h Those Δαίμονες were, amongst the Heathens, the souls of departed Heroes, or of such as had bestowed any signal blessings on mankind. Such had a worship paid to them; and their images were kept in their houses for that purpose. Something like this was to appear in this apostacy, and what more like this, than the worship of departed saints? There is an ancient reading here which confirms this, and which, if not originally in the text, shews very early the sense of it. *Some should depart from the faith, to which is added, so they shall worship the dead, as some also in Israel worshipp'd, giving heed, &c.*

by a lawful and genuine offspring. At the same time they are closely and strongly united amongst themselves under one head, the Pope; and are really independent of every government, where they reside. — *Commanding to abstain from meats.* So the Church of Rome has done, wednesdays and fridays, throughout the year, forbidding the use of flesh, unless they can afford to pay for a dispensation.

In the *Revelations of St. John* this formidable power is more expressly described, and in terms similar to those of Daniel, which shew the connection of one with the other. Here the image is of a *beast, that had great authority, after whom the world wondered; to whom was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God; made war with the saints, and overcame them*¹. The ten horns are ten kings, which have one mind, an uniformity of religion, and are united to this one head; *they give their strength to the beast*^k. We see the same extensive claim of dominion, and the same delusions practised, by means of those miracles, which he had power to do.

The name of this power is *mystery Babylon, the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth*¹: not Babylon literally, but figuratively, intending another power that resembles her in greatness, and idolatry, i. e. Papal Rome. — That we might not mistake in the application of the name, its seat is described, *the city which reigneth over the kings of the earth* — *The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the wo-*

¹ Rev. xiii. 2, 3, 5, 7, 14.

^k Rev. xvii. 12, 13.

¹ Rev. xvii. 5.

man sitteth^m.——This woman, which represents the same prodigious power, is further described by the ornaments of her prime ministers. *She sits upon a scarlet-coloured beast*ⁿ. The cardinals are here pointed out, whose robes of state, the hat, and mantle, are of that colour^o.

This book of revelations contains many affecting scenes of the pride and oppression of this power. However we can add with pleasure from the same prophetic record, that the fall of it will be as remarkable, as her usurped dignity. —It will be sudden, *in one hour*, probably by an earthquake. It will be in the height of her pride, *when she sits as queen*. It will be final. The eighteenth chapter contains the triumph of the Lamb and his followers over her. *Rejoice, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets,*
for

^m Rev. xvii. 9. 18. The situation of Rome upon mountains—upon seven hills was taken notice of ages ago, as appears from the following authorities.

Delegere locum, et posuere in montibus urbem.

Virg. Æn. viii. 53.

Diis, quibus septem placuere colles, dicere carmen.

Hor. Carm. Secul. 7.

Immensi caput orbis erit ———

Ov. Met. xv. 435.

Sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem

Montibus———

Ov. Trist. I. 4.

Divum favore cum puer Mavortius

Fundaret arcem septicollem Romulus.

Aurel. Prudent.

ⁿ Rev. xvii. 3.

^o The red hat was conferred upon them by Innocent IV. an. 1243. the scarlet robes by Paul II. Those are the persons, who are believed to have the Holy Ghost, and an extraordinary divine inspiration. —“ Though it was no great sign of it, in the year 1721. When during the election of a pope, their feuds and animosities ran so high, that they came to blows, and threw the standishes at one another. In this fray *Davia*, *Albani*, *Pamfili*, and *Aithan*, distinguished themselves. So that it is not at all strange, that, among the attendants of the conclave, there are always two or three surgeons in waiting.”

Vid. Keysser's Travels.

for God has avenged you on her. Alleluia ; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God, for he hath judged the great whore, and hath avenged the blood of his servants——
Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

I have insisted longer on this head, to awaken your jealousy and zeal against this power, which we are yet in danger from : and to excite our faith and patience in waiting for her overthrow.——*Lord how long ?*

I shall be shorter in the remainder of this head, and then come to what more immediately concerns us.—— But it may be convenient here, to make some *pause*, whilst we celebrate the sovereignty and triumphs of divine providence.

The H Y M N.

I.

Wisdom supreme ! designing cause !
 Whose mind the vast idea drew,
 For ages plan'd---with glad applause
 Its *rise*---its *course*---its *end* we view.

II.

By thy permission empires rise,
 Oppress ; with tyrant fetters bind ;
 Supplant each other : yet devise
 Schemes to embroil, and thin mankind.

III.

The PAPAL last, with hideous form,
 Succeeds, and fills the hostile place :
 Proud to destroy, drives on the storm,
 And then presumes to call it grace.

IV. Tho

IV.

Thou see'st those foes---to virtue foes,
And set'st a period to their sway;
Guarding thy church amidst those woes,
Wilt usher in the glorious day.

V.

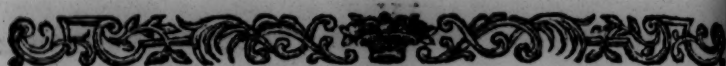
When wars shall cease, and passions fall,
And PEACE begin her endless reign.
Rejoyce ye heav'ns, ye martyrs all
The vengeance sing in rapt'rous strain.

VI.

Sing how the LAMB his foes destroy'd,
And to the pit old Satan spurn'd.
A thousand years in peace enjoy'd
Shew PARADISE to earth return'd.



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

Signs of the T I M E S.

M A T T. xvi. 3.

——— *Can ye not discern the signs of the times ?*

I AM considering some *grand events* of scripture prophecy ; the last mentioned was the rise and fall of mighty empires. Those that are past, since the prediction, will confirm the expectation of those which are yet future, as

2) *The RESTORATION and subsequent CONVERSION of the Jews.*

This people had the promise of an everlasting possession in the land of Canaan, and though for their disobedience they were to be expelled yet even then we presume the *right of inheritance* remained in them. The THEOCRACY, which was their civil constitution, was not dissolved by their captivities. Nor do I apprehend, that it now ceases, though their present dispersion has lasted so many ages, beyond their former captivities. They have this promise upon record which gives them the hope of a return to their country, on their repentance and humiliation

If when they are in the land of their enemies, they humble themselves, and repent, and turn unto the Lord their God, he would remember his covenant with their fathers, and not forsake them. Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee; and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee ^p. This promise being general, I believe, on the condition annexed to it, their restoration is encouraged in any period. Though from the present temper and disposition of this people, we have little hopes, that their restoration is very near.

The return of the Jews from Babylon, in their former captivities, was from one country; and from the EAST; and therefore it is reasonably supposed, that in all those prophecies, which speak of their return from the NORTH, and different parts of the earth, some restoration is intended, which has not yet existed with those circumstances. Vid. the passages referred to in the margin ^q. The temple after this future restoration differs, in some particulars, from the dimensions of Solomon's temple, as well as its site. It will not be on mount *Moriab*, as that was, but on mount *Zion*. In like manner there will be, in this new restoration, a different division and distribution of the land. And therefore this restoration is yet to be expected.

When this restoration begins, multitudes will return to Jerusalem to rebuild their city and temple; and restore their ancient worship and sacrifices.

D

^p Deut. xxx. 1, 2, 3. — iv. 25—32. Levit. xxvi.

—46.

^q Jer. xxx. 3—18. xviii. to the end. xxxi. 8. xxiii.

—9. iii. 17. 18. Ezek. xxxvii.

sacrifices. But then, as this will require a conjuncture of peace and quiet, the question will be, How we can suppose, such a powerful body, as the Turks are, will suffer this? They are in the prophecy distinguished by the name of GOG, and the prophet informs us, how they will be otherwise engaged, than to interrupt them. *Tidings out of the east, and out of the north shall trouble him*^r, i. e. some neighbour nations shall fully employ him in wars, and divert him from all manner of opposition to the Jews. In this favourable conjuncture the restoration will take place. This period is supposed to last from the going forth of the commandment to the coming of the Messiah, *seven weeks*^s. If we reckon a day for an year this period will be forty nine years, and during this interval they will be unmolested.

After this period the Turks will come up against the land. Their army will be numerous, and the devastation, they will make, astonishing. *Two parts of the inhabitants of the whole land shall be cut off, and the third part only left alive*^t. An affliction not to be paralleled. But then this is the time, this God's set time, when he will appear for his people, and overthrow their enemies with an amazing destruction. *He will call for a sword against GOG, throughout my mountains. Every man's sword shall be against his brother, I will plead against him with pestilence and blood; and I will rain upon him and his people, with an overflowing rain, with hail stone, fire, and brimstone*^u. This surprizing overthrow

^r Dan. xi. 44.^s Dan. ix. 23.^t Dan. xi.

xii. 1. Zech. xiv. 2. xiii. 8, 9.

^u Ezek. xxxviii.

21, 22. Zech. xiv. 12, 13, 16—20. Isa. xi. 11—

1x. 9, 10.

will make such an impression on the princes of the earth, that they will encourage and assist the Jews, among them, to return to Jerusalem. Then they will no more be disturbed in their possessions, and worship. In this conjuncture the Messiah, even Jesus Christ, will be manifested to them, probably by the ministry of some prophets, who will be raised up in an extraordinary manner amongst them. Then they will give up all their temple service, and be universally converted to CHRISTIANITY.

3) I shall only mention one more event of prophecy ; but then it is the most glorious of all the rest, viz. *the prevalency of the christian religion in all the world ; or the universal and perpetual establishment of Christ's kingdom.* This we may certainly expect, and rejoyce in the expectation.

The state of religion in this period will be most excellent, and flourish in perfection and glory. This is the new Jerusalem from heaven, described with the utmost magnificence and lustre ^w. Then will the true *genius* of christianity appear in every happy influence, in the practice of truth, righteousness and peace. The design of religion will then shine in every social virtue ; and the appearances of piety be animated with real flame and devotion. Friendship will be endearing, society kind and useful, and flow from native principles of honesty and benevolence. No heart will be averse to duty, and no duty, but what will proceed from the heart, and all center in the adoration of Deity, through the great mediator, the victorious Lamb.

^w Rev. xxi.

Its securities will be inviolable. No adverse power to molest it without, no tempter to seduce it within. Tyranny, and oppression of every kind will be abolished; Satan the grand corrupter and disturber of mankind will be *bound in chains, and cast into the bottomless pit* *. His snares, his delusions, his instruments will be no more able to embroil, or deceive the world. Its duration, *finally* will be very long. It is expressed by a *thousand years* of unclouded glory, and uninterrupted felicity †.

The

* Rev. xx. 2. 3.

† The following observation is ingenious and plausible. "Neither can I easily believe, that those constitutions of Moses, that proceed so much upon a SEPTENARY, or the number Seven, and have no ground or reason in the nature of the thing, for that particular number. I cannot easily believe, *I say*, that they are either accidental, or humourish without design or signification; but that they are typical, or representative of some Septenary State, that does eminently deserve and bear that character. Moses in the history of the creation makes Six days work, and then a Sabbath. Then after Six years he makes a Sabbath-year; and after a Sabbath of years, a year of Jubilee. All those lesser revolutions seem to me to point at the grand revolution, the great Sabbath, or Jubilee, after Six millenaries, which as it answers the type in point of time, so likewise in the nature and contents of it, being a state of rest from all labour, and trouble, and servitude, a state of joy and triumph, and a state of renovation, when things are to return to their first condition, and pristine order." *Burnet's Theory*, v. 2. p. 212. 213. — According to this account, Christ's glorious kingdom will not commence, till about 250 years hence. It may require so much time to prepare the world for this happy state, and possibly things may begin to operate very soon. This same notion we have in *Lactantius*, and some of the fathers, and they possibly from the Jews, who compute 2000 years before the law, 2000 years under the law, 2000 years under the Messiah, and then a 1000 years Jubilee. The Heathens had some notion of this, that in the Sixth age the present form and constitution of the world should cease, so Plato gives us this line from Orpheus,

Ἐὶ δὲ ἡ γυνὴ καὶ παῦσις κόσμος αἰεδὺς.

The whole Scene will be new and wonderful; and this wonder among the rest, that those holy men, who, in every preceding age, have resisted unto blood all spiritual tyranny, idolatry, and wickedness, shall be raised out of their graves, to behold the triumphs of their redeemer, and share in the felicities of his kingdom. *And I saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image; neither had received his mark on their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a 1000 years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the 1000 years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a 1000 years².* Thus their love and loyalty to the Prince of peace: thus their inviolable regard to CONSCIENCE, and the AUTHORITY of God will be finally and fully recompensed.

This conclusion of earthly things must enlarge our thoughts of the ways of Providence, which conducts human affairs, amidst all the disorders which they are subject, to this glorious issue. There is little reason to doubt of this happy issue, when our Saviour has already fulfilled his word, in the gift of the holy ghost, and in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a good pre-emption that what remains shall receive as punctual an accomplishment. — Yes, this same person, that will be at the head of this glorious state, was once cloathed with our flesh; once a helpless infant, afterwards acquainted with our

our miseries and sufferings; condemned and crucified as a malefactor. Then all this weakness and scandal will be done away. Hell, death, and all the powers of darkness will lye at his feet. What reflection more natural, than, *great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways Thou king of Saints* ^a. — I proceed

III . . . And lastly; to *Enquire whether we have had of late any Signs and tokens of some grand period approaching.*

I am not afraid of the imputation of vanity or Enthusiasm, in supposing, that we have had some such Signs. The impression surely cannot be yet worn off: the amazement and terror which every heart felt, cannot be forgotten. We have seen providence step out of its usual course. The Heavens no longer serene; the mountains no longer fixed on their basis; the waters no longer obedient to the stated laws of their motion. New causes on a sudden began to operate, and threw all the Elements into confusion.

This was the case in the late tremendous Earthquakes, by which Cities were removed from their foundations, and their inhabitants affrighted and wild with despair, entombed alive in their ruins. Such was the Fate of Fez and Morocco in Africa; of Lisbon in Europe; of Calao in America. Other nations trembled too in their foundations, and expected the consequence with pain. This was the case in the unusual agitations of the great Sea. Heaps of mountains of waters rolled on towards the shores and threatned deep inundations: there valleys

^a Rev. xv. 3.

unk and brought other dangers near, from
ocks, and sands, which now became almost
visible. This was the case, when storms of
breathtaking force and violence, bore down, in some
particular tracts, trees, houses, and whatever
stood in their way. This, finally, was the case,
when the moral world began to be agitated, as
well as the natural, and we heard of wars and
rumours of wars. And what deserves particular
notice, we see, what had no appearance about
twelve months since, all Europe running to
arms, and its political System changed. Those
are many of them uncommon events; all of
them unexpected.

Can this be only a fortuitous Scene? or the
accidental and irregular efforts of natural causes?
Providence, *certainly*, would never suffer such
violences and concussions, only to affrighten
and distress. We cannot reconcile events, in
this view, to that consummate wisdom and good-
ness, which preside over the world. Don't
those shocks seem to be the struggles and pangs
of nature, preceding some change in its con-
stitution? Or rather, is not this the voice of
heaven; the thunder of the Almighty, to
awaken the secure, to appall the guilty, and
raise in the world an expectation of some *grand*
Revolution approaching?

They cannot be unmeaning Signs; but, I am
persuaded, the *Apparatus* of some new Drama:
the introduction to some important changes,
which shall alter the present state of things,
and disconcert the Systems of the political world.
What the changes may be, I will not take upon
me to determine. That Being, who has taken
the work into his own hands, will render it
important, and accomplish nobler designs, than
the

the interests and passions of men have in view — Certain it is, that such events, as we have seen, did heretofore precede the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, and the propagation of the Gospel, through all nations. And why may we not expect, that similar events may be introduced by similar tokens? The Signs, we have seen, have been equally important; more diversified and extended: So extended, that half the globe has been affected and alarmed.

Our *Saviour* has told us, that those things were the forerunners of great events, and would it not be stupidity in us, not to pay a becoming regard to them? I must therefore leave it with you, as a reasonable supposition, that Providence has opened A GRAND SCENE. Let the sinners in Zion tremble, and be horribly afraid. That Being, who has sounded the alarm, is righteous and holy, and will make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. Lift up your heads ye righteous, and rejoice at those manifestations of a God, in whose favour and protection you are. — But 'tis time that we proceed to the

Application

of this subject; and I beg leave to do it with respect to our national character and importance. The question here will be, How providence will regard us in this shaking of the nations? Whether we have reason to hope, that we shall receive countenance and protection; and be honoured as instruments in the expected Revolution: Or whether, our sins will then come into remembrance, and provoke God to desert us;

to give us up awhile into that darkness we have escaped, and fall again under the power of that tyranny, from which we have been so often rescued.

The latter we have reason to fear. Our times carry on them an unhappy complexion, and we are sunk both in our moral and political character. In such circumstances, have we no reason to expect frowns from an abused Providence. From that Providence, which never yet deserted any, but those who first deserted themselves, and their duty? I find no pleasure in reciting instances of our degeneracy, from the virtue and glory of former times. But as we are met together to humble our selves before almighty God for our sins, it will be necessary to point them out, and to deal faithfully with you in it. How far they enter into a general and national character, I will not take it upon me to determine. This however I will venture to say with some confidence, that the sins I shall mention are of such a pernicious influence, as, in their prevalence, to affect the internal securities of a nation, and portend nothing but an absolute dissolution of government. Such as

Prophaness and immorality. I am sorry there is so much reason to say, that those have increased upon us beyond the example of former times, and yet in contempt of human and divine laws. What must be the cause, and what the consequence? I leave the cause to conjecture; but the consequence must be fatal. As much vice abounds, the obligations upon conscience will grow weaker. And then we need not wonder, if little regard is paid to God and his providence, or to those ties by which Societies are

E

held

held together, truth, peace, order, and equity. How evident is this corruption of manners amongst all ranks and degrees of men? In the lower class of people, by drunkenness, swearing and sabbath-breaking. In higher life, by various sensualities, and an excessive itch to gaming. Such practices must not only provoke God, but have a very bad effect on the persons themselves; enervate their mental powers, render them trifling in amusements, and ridiculous in action; and utterly incapable of sustaining any publick office with dignity ^b.

A selfish and private Spirit, under no restraint has a tendency to the worst practices; to fraud, deceit, and every rapacious method of enriching a family, which can be accomplished with secrecy, and impunity. I know nothing like this temper, that entertains such base designs incompatible with the love of our country. It disposes to *venality*, a readiness to be purchased on all occasions; and to comply with any measures, which will favour the favourite scheme — It *finally*, encourages *bribery* and *corruption*, the detestable sources of ruin. The selfishness sets up an interest, inconsistent with publick good; it perverts judgment in office; pollutes every sacrifice in religion where nothing but clean hands and an honest heart can be acceptable. No wonder this should be the effect when this venal temper confounds the essential differences of things; acts and speaks not because

^b Rarus enim firme sensus communis in illa
Fortuna —————

Stultitiam patiuntur opes —————

Juv. VIII. 73

Hor. Epist. I. 18, 29

because it is right, but because it is gainful. This
 that hated vice, that sacrifices conscience to
 riches, and stifles conviction in the thoughts of
 future ease and pleasure. And once it comes to
 affect the vital parts of our Constitution, it
 must destroy the balance of its powers, and as
 certainly introduce despotism and arbitrary go-
 vernment.

*Factions in a state, the struggles of parties for
 interest and power, often endanger; always en-
 feeble it. Hence proceed opposition of counsels,
 embarrassed measures, and envenomed tempers.*
 Their followers take the lead, and when put
 into a command of importance, such betray the
 same spirit, and study rather to mortify one
 another, than serve their country. How much
 more glorious would it be in the heads of Parties,
 to unite the flame of Patriot Zeal, which both
 sides pretend to, and warmly support a sink-
 ing constitution? That which is sinking must
 fall by those inward struggles; for 'tis a truth
 in all ages, *that a kingdom divided against itself
 cannot stand* ^c.

*An unhappy turn to pleasure, must have a bad
 effect upon a nation, supported by trade and
 commerce. I am sensible how unpopular it
 must seem to censure a general taste. Yet
 when food is corrupted, and turned into a
 poison, it would be cruelty not to point it out.*
 Pleasure is now become hurtful. It dissipates
 the thoughts, which cannot presently be recol-
 lected to business; it wastes the time, and tempts
 many to make appearances beyond their abili-
 ties. All this is too evident to be concealed,
 when every art is used to diversify and enlarge
 our pleasures.

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I might

^c Mark iii. 24.

when I might mention some other vices, particularly an affectation of celibacy, which all well regulated states have provided against: but I shall conclude this unpleasing task, with one instance more, *the growth of infidelity*. A contempt of christianity leads to a contempt of every publick form; and once this is become fashionable; interest and convenience will direct our professions, and one day may be favourable to popery itself. Time was when there was a more national regard paid to religion, and providence favoured us. If we alter our conduct, may we not expect that God will alter his? The Jews for rejecting the first offers of christianity, continue to this day under the displeasure of heaven. And have we no cause to fear, from the present situation of affairs in Europe, when the popish powers are so unexpectedly united, which can bode no good to the protestant religion^d. Our warmest attachment, therefore, to the christian religion must now be very seasonable, and highly pleasing to that God, who has condemned and punished infidelity.

This

^d This union is formed on a pretence of the king of Prussia's seizing Saxony, and commencing hostilities against the Queen of Hungary. But if his jealousy of those powers, from appearances and preparations, was well grounded, he had an undoubted right to put himself into a posture of defence. If afterwards he put it into the Queen of Hungary's power to determine his motions, by giving a clear and open declaration, that she had no intention to attack him, and she refused it. If papers were afterwards discovered, which plainly demonstrated a real correspondence of those powers, to attack and divide the Prussian dominions, all the world must justify the King of Prussia's measures, as just, wise, and necessary. And that the *hostilities* he commenced were

This is too much our national complexion, and there must be too much reason to fear that we are not in a disposition to receive new mercies. We have experienced a vicissitude of good and bad events, but have we been made either sadder or better? I doubt very little. We have been confident of our own wisdom and strength, and relied too much on an arm of flesh. Was it not just in Providence to rebuke such confidence; and leave us to give specimens of our DOLENCE, WEAKNESS, and INCAPACITY? We have had wars, that have drained us of our blood and treasure; we have felt the weight of an immense debt: But then have not the excesses of luxury and pleasure increased upon us at the same time? Nay have we not grown shy of the very appearances of piety and virtue; and

in consequence of a prior aggression upon him. — This is the chief bulwark of the *Protestant Interest* in Germany, which must fall, if he be not properly supported. All interests may be pretended, but there is too much reason to fear, that the *Protestant Religion* will be the sacrifice in the end. The houses of *Austria* and *Bourbon*, equally infamous for persecuting their protestant subjects, are now united, and will certainly follow their prevailing example. And some circumstances in the *Empire* look this way, in opposition of the *Protestant Religion*. The apostacy of the *Saxon family*, for the sake of a crown, is unfavourable, and may possibly lay a foundation for the intrigues at *Vienna*. The family that stood foremost in defence of *Luther* and the *Reformation*. The defection of the *Prince of Hesse* is another extraordinary instance of papal intrigues. When by the suggestion of his *Father*, and the states, he had signed an instrument to make his protestant subjects easy, a design was formed to seize him, and carry him to *Vienna*, that there he might reverse that very instrument. Those are too plain indications, what designs are framed against the protestant interest, and call upon all the patrons of it, to unite for its defence, and maintain the liberty and constitutions of the

and lost much of the fear of God. Should things go on at the rate they have done for some years past, I doubt we shall very soon lose the last hope of security in the divine patience and forbearance.

I would not be thought to exaggerate matters and lead any to conclude our case desperate. I hope there is still amongst us so much honesty and real religion, as might save us, by a proper improvement. Laws against vice have of late been put in some execution; the chief magistrate in a neighbouring city has honourably exerted himself to secure the outward reverence due to publick worship; and some christians have had their stated seasons of prayer for imploring the divine favour on our king and country. Those are encouraging views.— Give me leave to apply the subject more immediately to the present occasion of our assembly.

1) *It should lead us to repentance, and reformation*, especially as to any of those sins before mentioned. This is our present business. We humble ourselves for our sins. And we ought to do it with a sincere contrition of soul. We must not content ourselves with the solemnity of a FAST. To disfigure our faces, and mourn in sackcloth, will not answer the purposes of religion, unless the heart be suitably engaged and affected. *Rent your hearts, and not your garments* *. If we still continue in our sins, we shall but increase them by this mockery of heaven and take the way to intercept the blessings we ask, and turn our prayers into an abomination. We must lament our personal sins. This is

* Joel ii. 13.

plague of our own hearts, which we ought to know^f; and should desire to empty them of all those proud and vain thoughts, which prosperity might have infused.——We must lament the sins of others, because of our political relation to society. On this account we shall share in the blessings or judgments, sent upon it. We should therefore think our selves concerned in the prevalency of sin; in the spread of vice amongst all ranks and degrees of men. We should grieve that God has been openly dishonoured, and greatly provoked to send humbling judgments. —This is the duty of all; but more especially of the ministers of religion, and of magistrates. If they by the neglect of their office, have countenanced any of the forementioned vices; and contributed to the load of public guilt, they, I say, have particular reason to be penitent. They are to lead in the cause of Religion, peace, equity and good order, but if they are delinquents themselves, the inconsistency of their conduct must debase the dignity of their characters. Those duties honestly performed, and I hope by our coming here we intend it, would give us more confidence, than our warlike preparations, and the most potent alliances in which we trust.

(2) The subject should lead us to *the most cordial and honest attachment to our holy religion*. In the whole Scheme and conduct of Providence, the support of religion has been its principal view. This though it has appeared in different dispensations, is still the same in its essential character, the practice of piety and virtue. 'Tis the same original kingdom of God, that

was

^f 1 Kings-viii. 38.

was at first intended to subsist among men, and which is revealed in the gospel, with the greatest perspicuity and perfection. This religion would should love, esteem, and practise, as highly pleasing to God, and what will give us the best assurance of his favour and protection. Opposition to this Religion cost the beloved nation and chosen people of God the loss of all their national privileges. When we abuse the same mercies, we have reason to fear the same judgments. *If he spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*——To those who believe the authority, and divine institution of the Christian religion, Infidelity must appear a great offence, what will draw down divine judgments, and therefore the favourers of it must excuse our free censure of it. If we can no other way vindicate our religion from calumny and contempt, let us do it, by living up to our religion, and shewing the charms of a virtuous conversation.

(3) Another use of this subject is *to put upon our guard against* POPERY. This is the formidable power, the last mentioned in prophecy, which was to ravage and domineer over the world, and which it does presumptuously in the name of that very being, whose authority it prostitutes, and whose goodness it defeats *.

—A

* Rom. xi. 21.

** Thus the Pope assumes this proud title, intimating his jurisdiction and superiority over all persons of what degree or dignity soever they be; namely, *God's Vicar General on earth*, VICARIVS generalIS DEI IN TERRIS.——It has been observed, of the latin here, that if you take the numeral letters out of those words, and set against them the numbers, which they commonly stand for *amongst men*, and add them together, you will have the number 666, the very number of the *Beast*, Rev. xiii. 18.

—All God's dispensations are intended for the benefit and comfort of mankind; but this power acts quite the reverse, for the oppression of mankind. We have reason to say this from the effects, which we see in all those countries where popery is established. We see it possessed of the best lands in every country; it is draining continually the life of commerce by its daily labours for charity; it keeps the people ignorant and poor, and in a slavish dependance on their Priests, who at the same time live in ease, luxury, and pleasure. Is there not reason to watch against this power, and its numerous emissaries, which lie in wait to deceive. — If the honour of God, and our Saviour are dear to us, if the salvation of our souls, such vigilance is no more than necessary to secure those important ends. I say the salvation of our souls, because I can't think THAT attainable by this politic and carnal constitution^b. Popery is not Christianity, and we might as well hope for salvation from Mahometanism, as this. It is quite opposite to man in his nature, rights and end. Human nature has many friendly and social dispositions, which Popery suppresses. Liberty
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^b I presume this cannot be deemed an ancharitable censure, when popery is quite a different thing from christianity, and therefore unable to assure us of its rewards. But then though we thus judge of the constitution of popery, we hope God will have mercy on those, who are born and bred up under it. They deserve compassion, who are not allowed to enquire into the foundations of their faith; who are made depending on their priests, and kept in a perpetual dread of pains and penalties, if they admit the least doubt of their religion. There are so many watchful eyes on their consciences and conduct, that it is next to impossible to emerge out of this darknets.

and conscience have unalienable rights, which popery destroys. Moral goodness is necessary, by the terms of the gospel, to salvation, Popery diverts men from this, by the pageantry of her religion. Solemn masses, pompous processions, splendid altars and images, confessions, penances and absolutions, engross mens thoughts and time, that the restoring of the image of God to the soul, is concealed and kept out of sight. This is their way to heaven, and it is all artifice and imposition. The principal view is interest and power, and if men will come into this scheme, they will give them a 1000 promises and assurances, which they have no right to make, and no ability or authority to fulfill. As much then as we tender our salvation, we must quit this corrupt communion. *Instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. O my soul come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour be not thou united*¹. — 'Tis with regard to this power, that we are exhorted to preserve our integrity, to hold fast our crown, and continue faithful to the death.

4) And lastly; *let us look to the closing scene, the crown and perfection of all God's works, and from thence enlarge the pleasures of faith and hope.* Religion, in all the preceeding periods, has been conducted with various events. Sometimes it has been oppressed, to try the faith and patience of its professors; sometimes flourishing, to convince men of its happy tendency to secure the blessings of this life. In such lights religion has appeared, suitable to a state of trial, in which we are placed. But now it is to rise in full glory. The prophetic scenes in the Revelations

¹ Gen. xlix. 5, 6.

of the seven seals, trumpets and vials, all terminate in this period. The general meaning of those prophecies is intelligible enough, notwithstanding the obscurity in some circumstances. And possibly this obscurity may remain till near the time of their accomplishment, when this twilight will suddenly break into open day. I doubt not but the very time of those prophecies is fixed with the greatest precision, but I will not take it upon me to settle this circumstance, after so many, who have hitherto failed in their calculations. However it is matter of joyful hope to all good Christians, that, those iniquitous powers have already subsisted many ages, so their season is near expiring. Now providence may have begun to work, to concert the policies of the world, to break former unions, and throw the affairs of the world into such hands, and such circumstances, shall prepare for the *grand event*.—We shall judge wrong if we imagine we have no concern in things, which may be at some distance from us. Our Saviour speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, forty years before it opened, exhorted his hearers to vigilance and prayer, *that ye may be accounted worthy to escape those things that shall come to pass*^k. And the prophet, on the prospect of approaching danger, says, *come my people, enter into thy chambers, and thy doors about thee, and hide thyself, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth, for their iniquities*^l. The introductory scenes to the last may be full of trouble and danger, and

F 2

if

Luke xxi. 36.

^l Isa. xxvi. 20.

if we persevere in our duty and dependance, we may hope for protection. Those trials may not be so much to winnow the wheat, as separate the tares. Wicked men in all likelihood will principally feel the weight of God's anger.—Neither would I have any despise the Revelations for their obscurity. There are many things there clear and encouraging. There we find truth, righteousness and fidelity, commanded and honoured; that the church of God is under a constant protection; that truth and virtue will finally prevail; and that the enemies of both shall be totally overthrown. Here then let us erect a monument of praise to divine Providence, and express our gratitude in the acclamations of heaven, saying, *Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

To those reflections let us add our prayers and charity.—Let us pray for the excellent Prince on the throne, that God would spare his valuable life; support him under the weight of years and government; that he would surround him with faithful and able ministers of state; fill his counsels with wisdom, resolution, and unanimity; and render his measures successful and glorious in prosecuting the present war. And as we have been asking the charity of heaven for ourselves, nothing can be more pleasing to God, than a cheerful imitation of it. This will be one evidence of our sincerity, this that we are ready to *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor.* Which God grant of his infinite mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The H Y M N,

Sung after the Sermon †.

I.

Before Thee, O Almighty Pow'r
How shall we for our country plead?
Well may we dread the fatal hour,
For base ingratitude decreed.

II.

Rebuk'd we stand, and own 'tis just.
Desertion we deserve from God:
So prone to sin; so prone to-trust
An arm of flesh—We fear thy rod.

III.

Thine arm of mercy, Lord, can save,
Thine arm is strong, and unimpair'd
Thy mercy now we humbly crave,
Which would have once a Sodom spar'd.

IV.

Tho' mountainous our sins appear,
Hast Thou not here thy Abram's seed?
Who Thee, the great Jehovah fear,
And in that fear their children breed.

V. Let

* Communicated by a Friend.

V.

Let Britain never fall a prey,
To papal antichristian pow'r.
They'll take thy heav'nly lamp away;
Our lives and liberties devour.

VI.

To Thee for mercy now we fly,
Avert deserved punishment:
Deep in contrition here we lye.
Accept and bless the penitent.

F I N I S.





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